The Report Committee for Andrew Joel Stravers
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report

American Military Presence Abroad:
Trends and Analsysis

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor:

Patrick J. McDonald

Michael G. Findley

American Military Presence Abroad:
Trends and Analsysis

by

Andrew Joel Stravers, B.A.

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Abstract

American Military Presence Abroad: Trends and Analysis

Andrew Joel Stravers, M.A.

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Supervisor: Patrick J. McDonald

This paper examines one basic question: what explains trends in American military deployments abroad? In other words, why does the U.S. military establish a non-combat presence in particular countries and at particular times? Scholars have posited two main answers to this question. First, many authors consider basing a purely strategic consideration rooted in Great Power rivalries, weapons technology, and polarity. Second, research since the Cold War has mainly considered basing within the context of the regime structure of the host country, with some regime types (democracies) better suited as basing partners than others. This paper examines time series cross-sectional statistical evidence for each, and it concludes that while each strain of thought provides valuable contributions to our understanding of basing trends, none fully explain American basing outcomes.

I propose a theory in which the main driver of basing trends comes from within the United States. In other words, domestic political considerations within the American system of government best explain variations in American basing abroad. Presidential incentives, for instance, arise from a national constituency that judges him on how effectively he carries out the U.S. military's missions. However, congressional incentives

are such that individual representatives prefer to bring American forces back onto U.S. soil so that they may take advantage of the economic benefits that the troops provide to their home districts and to constrain the president's power. As such, the long-term trend since 1950 is toward less overseas basing and more basing within the United States. Previous studies provided insights into the international determinants of American foreign basing. This study adds domestic American politics to the overall puzzle, leading to a more complete understanding of the intersection between foreign and domestic dynamics as regards the international deployment of American forces.

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The Question

This paper examines one basic question: what explains trends in American military deployments abroad? In other words, why does the U.S. military establish a non-combat presence in particular countries and at particular times? Scholars have posited two main answers to this question. First, many authors consider basing a purely strategic consideration rooted in Great Power rivalries, weapons technology, and polarity. Second, research since the Cold War has mainly considered basing within the context of the regime structure of the host country, with some regime types (democracies) better suited as basing partners than others. This paper examines time series cross-sectional statistical evidence for each, and it concludes that while each strain of thought provides valuable contributions to our understanding of basing trends, none fully explain American basing outcomes.

In this paper, I propose a theory in which the main driver of basing trends comes from within the United States. In other words, domestic political considerations within the American system of government best explain variations in American basing abroad. Presidential incentives, for instance, arise from a national constituency that judges him on how effectively he carries out the U.S. military's missions. However, congressional incentives are such that individual representatives prefer to bring American forces back onto U.S. soil so that they may take advantage of the economic benefits that the troops provide to their home districts and to constrain the president's power. As such, the long-term trend since

1950 is toward less overseas basing and more basing within the United States. Previous studies provided insights into the international determinants of American foreign basing. This study adds domestic American politics to the overall puzzle, leading to a more complete understanding of the intersection between foreign and domestic dynamics as regards the international deployment of American forces.

The paper is laid out in five sections. The first explains my reasoning for the specific theory of American military deployments I am presenting. This is meant to provide context for the statistical tests that follow. The second section summarizes previous theories on basing and American military presence around the world. The third section lays out the data and measures I used for the statistical tests that follow in section four. And in the final section, I briefly explain one specific implication of my findings.

Theoretical Background

The basis of my theory is that individuals within the political branches of American government make deployment decisions with office-specific incentives in mind. When we put ourselves in the shoes of particular policy makers or planners and make individual calculations about the costs and consequences of decisions, we will see that choices are often made not in the interests of the "general public." Decisions are often not based on notions of grand strategy or military logic. Unsurprisingly, political officials often make decisions within the context of a political calculus, rather than a geostrategic one. In other words, basing decisions reflect calculations of what will most likely assist the officeholder's electoral prospects.

With that in mind, we see that the incentives at play for different types of political officials are quite diverse. The president of the United States has a national constituency, and thus his incentives generally align more with notions of the "national interest" and public goods. Scholars have noted that this is the case when it comes to trade (Conconi, Facchini, and Zanardi 2012), the use of force (Howell and Pevehouse 2005, 2007), general diplomacy (Putnam 1988), and governing across all issues (Bond and Fleisher 1990). As such, the driving force behind presidential decision-making when it comes to basing is the broad national interest.

The national interest, when it comes to basing and military presence, includes a dedication to the military "mission" that is currently at play, in

accordance with national security strategy. Over the past 65 years, the mission for the American military has been one of "forward defense." During the Cold War, forward defense included stationing massive resources in Central Europe to defend against a Soviet invasion of NATO allies. Likewise, large groups of military assets were stationed in East Asia – in Korea along the DMZ, and in Japan, Guam, and the Philippines. Currently, the mission is mostly focused on the Middle East and South Asia, with priority given to assets aimed at prosecuting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most recently, forces realigned in Europe to stretch further east as part of the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), following Russian provocations in Ukraine.

As we can see from the preceding paragraph, the geographic focus of American military policy abroad can change relatively quickly in accordance with world events, especially since the end of the Cold War. Before the September 11 attacks, few expected a protracted conflict in Central Asia, and prior to the Russian annexation of Crimea, similarly few analysts considered a resurgent Russian threat and, as a corollary, an ensuing reemergence of Eastern Europe as a strategic focus. Given the speed of international events, flexibility must be one of the main priorities of the president when he is executing American military policy. An increased ability to flexibly restructure the American overseas presence makes it easier for the president to use force in response to a hot-spot crisis or to deter anticipated aggression.

Flexibility has military, political, and efficiency benefits. Militarily, the ability to flexibly respond to a crisis prevents a long lag time between the initiation of a conflict and the ability to act upon the situation with force. This ability prevents the opposition from having sufficient time to prepare for an inevitable siege, shift around assets, and generally plan for an American strike. The military benefits of quick response and surprise are relatively obvious.

Politically speaking, if the president has an increased ability to order an attack on a moment's notice, going to Congress for approval reduces in necessity and practicality. If the president can act before seeking congressional approval, he can present Congress with a fait accompli, in which case members of Congress are faced with a decision to withdraw de facto support for an ongoing operation rather than granting or withholding permission before operations commence. Past cases, such as President Clinton's bombing of Iraq or Kosovo in the late 1990s or President Reagan's invasion of Grenada, are good examples of the political benefits of quick response. In both cases, the president had no need to request congressional support beforehand, because prepositioned forces allowed him to strike upon giving the order. The ensuing congressional discussions about whether to defund ongoing operations went nowhere, with individual members of Congress unwilling to risk looking unsupportive during ongoing operations.

In terms of efficiency, a flexible basing apparatus prevents situations in which the U.S. military faces a poor bargaining situation. For instance, after

operations in Afghanistan commenced in 2001, it was increasingly obvious that the logistical infrastructure in Central Asia was inadequate for maintaining a large force in Afghanistan indefinitely. As will be explained in further detail in a subsequent section, Congress never would have authorized a deployment to Central Asia before the 9/11 attacks, despite the potential strategic benefits. However, after American involvement in Central Asia became necessary and obvious, countries in the region held the upper hand in their bargaining with the U.S. military. This resulted in hundreds of millions being spent for basing rights in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, along with a disadvantageous deal with Russia to ship supplies overland via Russian rail links. Negotiated and flexible basing rights prior to the onset of the crisis would have alleviated such difficult bargaining situations, which cost significant money and time.

Of course, the utmost goal that connects all of the items on this presidential wish list is reelection. More than any other political official, the electorate judges the president in terms of mission effectiveness and perceived competence. The execution of ongoing military operations often becomes a central campaign issue, as it did during the Vietnam War, the Iranian hostage crisis, the second Iraq War, and America's continuing involvement in a destabilized Middle East following the Arab Spring. The perception that the president was capable of responding in a timely and effective manner is a huge boon to his hopes of reelection, and the opposite impression can potentially doom a campaign. Of course, this is the case directly

during a President's first term, but the incentives during the second term remain national in nature. The President seeks to retain a modicum of political capital in order to benefit his successor's chances of election. Even if the President cares nothing for his party's position after he leaves office (an unlikely scenario), the incentives skew potentially even more toward making decisions in terms of "the national interest." Without the necessity of satisfying particular constituencies or maintaining popularity for reelection, the President is free to pursue what he sees as truly national goals.

Members of Congress (MC) have quite different incentives. Reelection is of course the paramount goal for any MC, just as it is for any other political official, but the route to congressional reelection is quite different from the one for the president. Rather than a national constituency, MC's have narrow and local ones that often base their decisions on more local considerations, like the state of unemployment or the closing of particular businesses (Fordham and Mckeown 2003**;** Jeong 2009**).** Constituents judge their representatives based on local economic conditions, the perceived legislative effectiveness of their representative, and for representatives affiliated with the opposing party to the president, they are judged based on their ability to restrict the president's agenda.

The last two items are the most important for the purposes of this study and in terms of basing. MC's are loath to approve massive expenditures on a basing apparatus abroad, especially in any instance where the base could plausibly operate

on American soil (or where a base abroad would mean the loss of a base at home). Military bases can often be a huge economic boon for a district's economy. As we can see from the massive political infighting that occurs over any round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), the loss of a base in an MC's district can be a death sentence for their electoral prospects (Mayer 1995). On the other hand, fighting for the maintenance of a base or the addition of a base into the district can be hailed as a measure of the MC's legislative effectiveness and influence with the president, the Department of Defense (DoD), and within Congress itself. These bases infuse the district with thousands of jobs, and millions of dollars of construction and infrastructure investment. They then form the spine of an economy that can sprout up around the base to provide services to the personnel. The electoral nightmare that ensues after the closing of a base in an MC's district has actually led to an annual amendment (since the latest BRAC in 2005) to the National Defense Authorization Act that forbids any new BRAC round, despite the potential for tens of billions of dollars in federal savings. In addition, Congress always makes it abundantly clear that no BRAC will be considered without significant cuts to the basing apparatus abroad first (Vandiver 2012).

Secondly, in districts that are highly opposed to the president and his party, opposition to the president's foreign policy agenda is likely to be popular under normal circumstances. While it may seem overly cynical, other scholars have established that Congress often opposes the president's agenda, regardless of its

"objective" wisdom, simply out of partisan interest (Bond and Fleischer 1984**;** Lee 2008). Former Democratic Senator Joseph Lieberman stands as a prominent example of what can happen to an opposing-party MC when he supports the president's foreign policy agenda. Lieberman's embrace of the Iraq War and then-President George W. Bush's foreign policy led to his defeat in the Democratic Primary in 2006.

Regardless of partisanship, MC's have an incentive to (at least optically) oppose wasteful spending. A strategically beneficial concept in overseas basing (and military strategy in general) is *redundancy*. Redundancy is militarily wise; if a particular base is attacked, temporarily cut off, or otherwise incapacitated, then there are other routes the military can take to accomplish the same mission. This taps into the general concept of force dispersion, which advises the use of diverse positions in order to avoid the possibility that a single attack could defeat the majority of forces. Failure to do so can result in a situation like the Pearl Harbor attacks prior to WWII, in which the majority of the American Pacific fleet (with the exception of the fleet's aircraft carriers) were docked in neat rows in port, making it easy for the Japanese attackers to deal a devastating blow.

Perhaps even more importantly, especially on a routine basis, is the concept of redundancy when it comes to the negotiation of *basing rights*. The previous example of Central Asia is again instructive here. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan knew that the United States had particular infrastructure needs in the region, and options

were limited. Because of the lack of alternative pathways to Afghanistan, those countries drove a hard bargain and extracted hundreds of millions of dollars from the United States for basing rights. Similarly, before the American invasion of Iraq, the United States sought to set up a second front in the North against the Hussein regime. As there were no other options in the region, the local countries sought to extract maximum benefit from the American negotiators. Before eventually turning down the package, the United States offered Turkey $6 billion in direct transfers and over $20 billion in loan guarantees (Filkins and Schmitt 2003). While geography obviously played a big role in both of these situations, the lack of secondary options weakened the American bargaining position and resulted in enormously expensive basing proposals. These situations could have been avoided by producing basing redundancy, especially in regions of particular strategic importance, such as the Middle East and South Asia, but such a concept is anathema to the congressional budgeting process. Congress returns any redundant capacity abroad back to the continental US and sees it as an efficiency gain, regardless of the long-term costs that may be involved in the event of a crisis.

None of this is to say that individual members lack any awareness of geopolitical issues and the strategic wisdom of basing forces abroad. However, the long-term result of the two legislative items above (prohibition on a new BRAC round along with strict justifications for every part of overseas facilities) has led to attrition in the overseas presence of the United States. Without specific alternative

instructions from Congress, the DoD is forced to repatriate money, facilities, and personnel from abroad. The combination of these two legislative rules leads to a situation in which Congress passively creates a certain amount of "bloat" at home by putting strict rules on the flexibility of overseas basing.

Given these diverging incentives, my theory leads to two overarching hypotheses.

- **Hypothesis 1:** The general trend since WWII is toward basing American military forces within the continental U.S. itself.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Fewer American forces will be based abroad when the president and Congress are from opposing parties.

Hypothesis 1 can be shown using simple descriptive statistics, so the main hypothesis at play within this study is hypothesis 2. While this hypothesis bears similarity to the one proposed by Howell and Pevehouse (2005, 2007), it is theoretically distinct as a distributional issue. It is also temporally prior to the actual use of force, as a basing and presence structure needs to be established before any substantial military force can be used. I will go into greater detail on the similarities and differences elsewhere, along with the theoretical benefits that can be derived from analyzing basing and uses of force as distinct entities unto themselves.

Previous Answers

Geography and Military Strategy

The oldest and most consistent answer throughout the past literature on basing is that the United States deploys its forces abroad on a mainly strategic basis (Sandars 2000, Harkavy 1989, Blaker 1990). These authors generally view bases as placed in particular geographic contexts because of the status (range, power, size, price, etc.) of weapons systems, the chief rival of the basing state on the world stage (where weapons need to be delivered, hypothetically), and how those two variables interact. These authors have gone so far as to estimate the exact points at which the air power of the United States and the Soviet Union/China become evenly matched based on the placement of each side's forces (Blaker 1989; 76). In addition, they have conducted analyses of different routes of attack in cases of conflict, which make the most sense logistically, and which routes would be hardest for the opponent to cut off.

Empirically, this strategic-centric set of theories leads to a certain set of expectations. Primarily, American forces should be placed because of the countries' geographic relation to a rival and the rival's forces. For instance, the Soviet Union and China both concentrated their forces along their shared Manchurian border during the late 1960s and early 1970s, rather than the border areas of Xinjiang. Oppositional forces have a kind of "mirroring" effect, and often areas become strategically important because of the actions of the rival. Similarly, while certain

areas of the world were inherently strategically important (Europe, for instance) during the Cold War, much of the focus on these areas by either side was due to the existing concentration of rival forces. Obviously, strategic military interaction is much more complicated than this, but this simplification is sufficient for the subject at hand.

We should also expect that the internal characteristics of basing states should have little effect on basing trends, with the exception of countries that militarily align with the United States. Since geography is the most important variable in these strategic calculations, American forces should be placed in countries without reference to the countries' particular characteristics. Further, we should expect there to be little reason for the American political system to have an impact upon the location of U.S. military presences. In this theory, military officers (and minimally, the president) control the location of American forces, based on the geographic concentration and the focus of the targeted rival. Therefore, the only variables of consequence to strategic-centric theories should be military alliance and geographic positioning, with all other variables showing a relatively random distribution of American bases.

Host State Regime Type

Scholars have espoused a second viewpoint since the end of the Cold War, which takes politics into account, and it makes the prediction that democratic

governments make better basing partners than non-democratic ones. One variant of this argument holds that fully democratic partners are the best, followed by fully autocratic partners (Cooley 2008). In Cooley's theory, consolidated regimes on either end of the Polity spectrum have entrenched political incentives with stable interest groups. Those factors make it less likely that political figures within stable regimes will use the basing situation as a rallying cry for nationalist opposition or as a source of rent with which to satisfy a constituency.

The worst partners in Cooley's theory are anocratic states, which have less stable institutions. Leaders in these states are said to manipulate the basing relationship for political gain depending on the whims of public opinion, whereas the steady institutions of established democracies or autocracies have a mediating and stabilizing effect upon the relationship. A RAND Corporation study recently adopted a similar theory, but it differed from Cooley by positing that the trend is a linear one, where democratic states are the best basing partners, anocratic states are second-best, and fully autocratic states are the worst (Pettyjohn and Vick 2013).

The empirical implication of this theory is that the United States will have a larger presence in democracies, though there are two possible dynamics that could produce this predicted trend. First, policy makers could know that democratic states make for better basing partners and place forces there intentionally. Second, through attrition, democratic states could simply be more durable basing partners, with autocratic and anocratic states falling from the list of basing partners over

time. Similarly, this dynamic would produce a greater tendency toward basing more American forces in democracies.

Therefore, this discussion of previous theories leaves us with the following predictions.

- **Strategic theory hypothesis:** Forces are distributed to militarily aligned states and those within areas of strategic contestation. All else will be randomly distributed.

- **Democratic theory hypothesis**: Forces are distributed at higher rates to democratic states.
    - **Cooley**: Secondary spike in the data in autocratic states.
    - **RAND**: Linear trend towards basing in increasingly democratic states.

Data and Measures

Dependent Variables

In order to test these hypotheses properly, a clear explanation of the data and variables used to do so is necessary. To test the previous three theories, I use a database of all partners in an American dyad from 1950-2014. Since the purpose of this study is to understand the nature of overseas American military presence, the inclusion of the number of forces deployed inside the territorial U.S. is not necessary.

The main dependent variable used to test these hypotheses is the number of American personnel deployed to a country. This is the most accurate measurement of the American *presence* in a particular country during a given year. More personnel require a larger infrastructure to serve, they are harder to "hide" from the local population, and most Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) place a heavy focus on limitations to the number of personnel allowed in country, as opposed to how many buildings, flights, or types of equipment are permitted. The introduction of personnel is a highly political process that inevitably leads to interactions between the local population and the American military, whereas the existence of American buildings or the prepositioning of equipment are generally less political in nature. In addition, if the basing state's population or government are to feel threatened by the introduction of anything from the United States, it is most likely to be the people; their introduction can often make the U.S. presence feel like an invasion by a foreign

force. It is therefore not the equipment or facilities that are a threat (or a benefit, for that matter), but rather the people who use them, the people who interact with the local population, act as a tripwire against foreign intervention, and infuse the local economy with foreign capital. The introduction of personnel also provides a potential benefit to the basing state's population, by creating a need for local contractors to service the base with food and equipment.

Others have focused on counting "bases" or trying to find other ways to measure the American "presence" in a place, but what counts as a "base," "installation," "facility," or any other structural presence of the United States is highly open to interpretation. For instance, many analysts would consider the American "base" in Wiesbaden, Germany to be a single large facility. However, according to the way that the U.S. military itself counts installations, Wiesbaden contains at least seven installations. Outside analysts often make assumptions on what constitutes a "base" on the basis of geographic proximity, but the U.S. military tends to classify sites based on either function or service branch. This provides for a great deal of confusion when trying to count such things.

Furthermore, there is a great deal of ambiguity as to what constitutes an "American" facility. For instance, in its annual Base Structure Reports (BSRs), the Department of Defense (DoD) lists only a single site being used in Kuwait, with zero American personnel located there and only a $6.7 million Plant Replacement Value (PRV, the cost it would take to remake the facility elsewhere) (BSR 2013).

Obviously, this data is misleading, as the United States maintains some of its largest bases in the world in Kuwait, and the American military annually stations upward of 25,000 personnel in the desert of this Gulf kingdom. There are a few loopholes that allow this listing in the BSR to be technically accurate. One is that the United States does not legally "own" the facilities in Kuwait. Rather, the Kuwaiti government owns them and the U.S. military simply uses them. The report is therefore technically accurate, but it is also highly misleading and likely to give a false impression of the American presence in the area.

Secondly, much information is missing from the BSRs, and it is not clear whether the absence of a site listing means no site is present or if the site that is there is a secret one. Again, a Persian Gulf case is instructive, where the BSRs have *no* listings for Saudi Arabia, despite the fact that the United States maintains a significant presence at airfields near Dhahran and elsewhere. As a political document, the BSR is susceptible to a large amount of "scrubbing," as many basing countries do not wish to be associated with any kind of seemingly "permanent" foreign presence on their territory. It also provides Congress with a potential docket of installations to close during rounds of budget cutting, so that making a comprehensive listing available is politically difficult at home as well. However, by looking at personnel deployments, we can see that the United States maintained a presence of nearly 5,000 troops in Saudi Arabia until 2001, when it was reduced to

between 250 and 350. Both the original sizable presence and the variation in it after 2001 are completely absent from the BSRs.

There are other downsides to trying to count bases as well, especially with the use of Pentagon base data, which are inconsistent. The use of BSRs is complicated by the fact they only list personnel when they are "permanently" stationed in a particular country. Thus, you often find numbers that defy an intuitive understanding of the status of the American basing structure abroad. For instance, BSRs do not have any listings for personnel deployed to active conflict zones. Despite having tens of thousands of forces in Iraq and Afghanistan during the mid-2000s, there are no listings for bases or personnel in either of these two countries in any BSR. These inconsistencies in the counting of what constitutes a "base" have led analysts to present a wide array of counts that range from a few dozen to more than a thousand. Obviously, such a variation is not helpful when attempting to provide empirical backing for any particular theory. Therefore, a count of personnel deployments is more accurate and more methodologically useful at this point.[1]

However, a sheer count is not particularly appropriate for use in this study because of the importance of outlier cases. For instance, Germany routinely stationed several hundred thousand American forces during the Cold War. This outlier case significantly alters the trend lines for American deployments when correlated with any other variable. When looking at the sheer distribution, the

[1] U.S. Military deployment information obtained from the dataset created by Tim Kane of the Heritage Foundation through 2005. The rest was continued through 2014 using Department of Defense information at https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp_reports.jsp

[2] All bilateral information on alliances, economic trade flows, Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs)

majority of U.S. deployment cases are clustered at a few dozen, which is the standard U.S. Marine embassy detachment, but there is an extremely long "right tail" to the distribution for cases like Germany, Japan, and South Korea, as we see below. Logging the dependent variable here normalizes the distribution and evens the trend lines, controlling for the tendency of outlier cases.

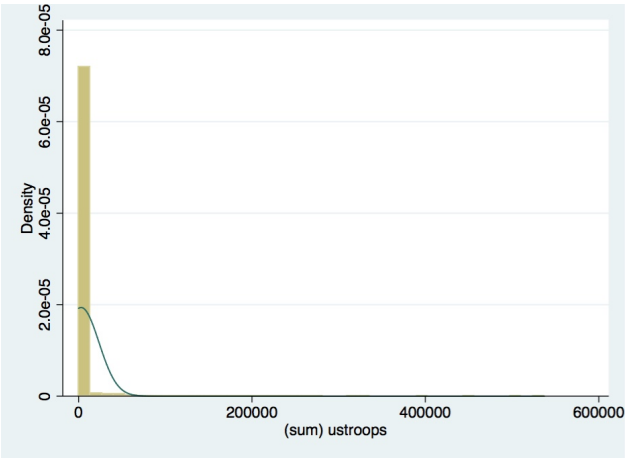

Figure 1a: Sum of Troops

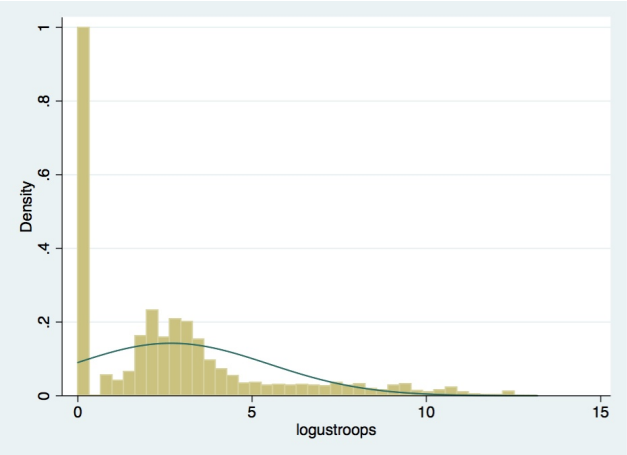

Figure 1b: Logged sum

Independent Variables

The main independent variable of interest to hypothesis 2 is the partisan makeup of the political branches of the U.S. government. I measure this using the data from Howell and Pevehouse, which calculates a percentage of Congress that is the same party as the president (president's party percent). In accordance with the theoretical discussion above, I expect that the deployment of forces to any given country will increase in circumstances where the president's party has a higher percentage of control in Congress.

To test for the geographic theory of strategic importance, I have included dummy variables based on region. Particularly during the Cold War, Europe and Asia were the two foci of American containment strategy. If geography plays a critical role on the macro, continental level, then the dummy variables for the Asia and European regions should be significant. In addition, the majority of geopolitical focus has been on the Middle East in the post-Cold War period, starting with the first Gulf War in 1990 and 1991. While this is an admittedly crude measure, the effect of including these variables corrects for broad-level strategic considerations, so that any regression equation does not treat all states as pure equals. Rather, some states in more critical regions have strategic priority over similarly situated states in other regions. In addition, when looking at the broadest, global level of strategic Great Power competition, the continental level is not an altogether improper level of analysis.

While these dummy variables correct for cross-regional variation in strategic importance, many other factors could theoretically play a pivotal role in deciding base outcomes. First, I include a series of variables related to the general American defense apparatus that may influence the placement of American forces in particular countries. These variables account for general changes in the structure of the American defense footprint abroad. A measure of the total number of American personnel abroad controls for changes within individual American partners being the product of a general outward "push" of American forces abroad, and a measure

of the total American defense budget (corrected for constant 2005 U.S. dollars) corrects for general growth or reduction in the American defense budget from year to year.

Variables specific to basing states also have a potentially decisive role in the distribution of the American basing constellation abroad. First, I include a variable for whether or not the state is currently the target of a large-scale American war. During a large ongoing conflict, the infusion of American forces will raise the number of personnel within the state temporarily. This is not, however, a measure of the status of that nation as a base of American forces. Rather, it is the *target* of American force rather than a power projection mechanism. Therefore, I restrict the analysis to contexts in which the deployment is not part of an ongoing military operation against the dyadic partner state.

Second, I include a variable to measure whether or not the nation is in an alliance with the United States and if so, what type of alliance. At the start of the Cold War, part of the containment strategy was to weave strategically important countries into a network of multilateral (but American-led) alliances that dissuaded small-scale and piecemeal Soviet aggression. Alliance partners were often secured by placing American forces on the partner's territory in order to act as a "tripwire" and force American entry into a situation of Soviet aggression against the partner. The expectation, therefore, is that alliance partners will see higher levels of

American forces present, with deeper alliance partners receiving greater American personnel deployments.

Military capabilities have the ability to significantly alter the dynamics of a basing relationship. There are (at least) two distinct ways in which military capabilities could theoretically play a role in changing the American basing footprint. First, the United States could target weaker states that have less bargaining leverage to dictate its basing structure on foreign territory. This would obviously lead to the general trend toward American bases in smaller and weaker countries. Second, the planners, logisticians, and military officials charged with maintaining the American basing constellation abroad might prefer American bases to be located within highly capable allies that will further dissuade any aggression from targets of the basing apparatus. This also acts as a way of ensuring the safety of the American basing presence abroad, and reduces the likelihood of the "tripwire" actually being activated.

Much of the international relations literature translates the raw capabilities measure from the Correlates of War (COW) Project into a dyadic capabilities ratio, since the raw measure is only an indicator of the particular state's percent of the global total capabilities. Since half of the bilateral partnerships included in this study are always the United States, the ratio maintains relative consistency across the time period. With the exception of the first decade of the temporal domain, the American percentage of global capabilities is remarkably consistent, and so the

relationship between the U.S. and its bilateral partner is largely a function of changes in the dyadic partner's capabilities. To get a better sense of this, I have included a temporal graph of American capabilities as a percentage of the global total below, which shows its consistency**.** In the standard models within the body of this paper, I include the capabilities ratio measure, but I have also included models using the raw capabilities score (in the appendix) order to show that the results are not dependent upon the specific modeling of this variable.

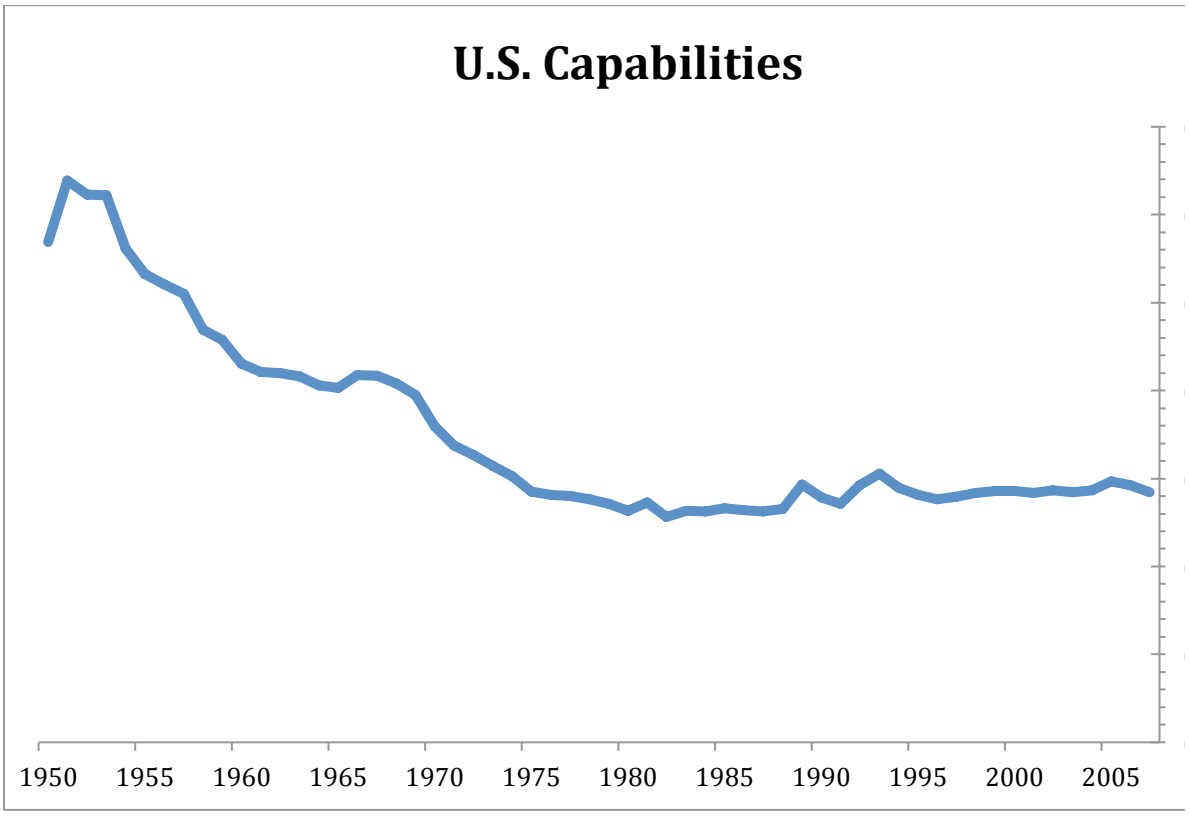

Figure 2. U.S. military capabilities as a percent of global capabilities, 1950-2005.

As discussed in the introduction, some scholars have hypothesized that democratic states make better bases for the United States (Cooley 2008; Pettyjohn

and Vick 2013). To help discern the empirical effect of regime type upon trends in American presence, I include the Polity IV measure of regime type.[2] While some scholars have cast doubt on the wisdom of using the Polity indicator (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi 2000), it is still the standard in international relations literature. In order to create as much of an "apples to apples" comparison to previous research as possible, I have included it here.

[2] All bilateral information on alliances, economic trade flows, Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) and Major Power classifications obtained from the EUGene dataset at http://eugenesoftware.org/.

Testing Hypotheses

Now that I have defined the datasets and important variables, the validity of both my own hypothesis and previous ones can be tested. I will first test each theory's empirical validity separately, and then I will gradually merge the models one-by-one to test how the variables behave when the others are introduced. For a complete listing of models, their key variables, and changes to modeling technique, see Appendix A.

Domestic Politics Theory

As stated above, the main independent variable to test the impact of American domestic politics on overseas presence is partisan dispersion within the political branches of government. When the same party controls both Congress and the presidency, we should see that the American presence within any particular country expands, as Congress acquiesces to the president's preferences for "pushing" forces forward to provide flexible responses to crises. Of course, the opposite is also expected. When Congress is controlled by the opposition party, we should see a contraction in overseas presences, as MC's act on their political preferences for bringing bases back to American soil.

It is worth noting that the structure of Congress does not change from bilateral partner to bilateral partner. The presidential party's percent variable is a purely American variable, and since the unit of analysis in the study is all American

dyadic pairs, it is the same for all countries in a particular year. This variable then acts as a year-fixed effect, giving a specific value to the particular year in which the particular dyadic partnership existed. Because of this feature of the model, the method of correcting for time dependence is always year-fixed effects in models that include the presidential party's percent variable.

Model 1 uses random effects to model for cross-sectional dependence. Heteroskedasticity is an issue within this dataset, as many countries have a high degree of variation (Saudi Arabia, for instance, ranges from many thousands to zero) and others show little variation. I produced robust standard errors by clustering the errors on the dyadic-partner level to account for country-specific variance across the dataset, rather than assuming homoskedasticity.

The results of this preliminary model, which only includes the key variable for hypothesis 2, show a significant effect of American domestic politics on the deployment of U.S. troops within the bilateral partnerships. Model 1a uses country-fixed effects to model for the possibility that country-specific factors dictate the results. As we can see, both models produce significant and positive results as expected for the President of the United States' (POTUS) party percent variable.

Table 1

Variable	Model 1	Model 1a
President's Party Percent	**0.4305	**0.4203
	0.1451	0.1447
Alliance	1.6650	1.3799
	0.8623	0.9768
Capabilities ratio	-0.1118	0.1033
	0.1890	0.2437
Distance	-0.0001	(omitted)
	0.0001	
MID	-0.6059	-0.5953
	0.3259	0.3186
Total Troops Abroad	0.0000	0.0000
	0.0000	0.0000
DoD Budget Constant	* 9.067e-07	* 1.265e-06
	4.451e-07	4.890e-07
Constant	*2.9495	1.6527
	1.4159	1.1854

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

The results of these baseline models indicate that the composition of Congress has a statistically significant effect upon American presence in its dyadic partners.

Substantively speaking, we can get an impression of the size of this effect by examining some descriptive statistics. To start, the simple mean of the number of American personnel in a dyadic partner during years of unified government (Congress and president of the same party) is 3,208. When the U.S. government is divided along party lines, the mean is 2,653. As would also be expected from the theoretical discussion above, the variance under unified governments is also significantly higher than under divided governments (22,791 to 18,846, respectively). This indicates that larger changes generally occur under unified governments, but that the result is a tendency for higher deployments. Furthermore,

we can see that these trends continue as the strength of the president's party grows in Congress. While unified governments have a mean of 3,208 personnel deployed in the dyadic partner, governments with an absolute majority have a mean of 3,484 and a variance of 23,509, indicating even greater maneuverability in basing arrangements. Graphically, the trend line looks as follows.

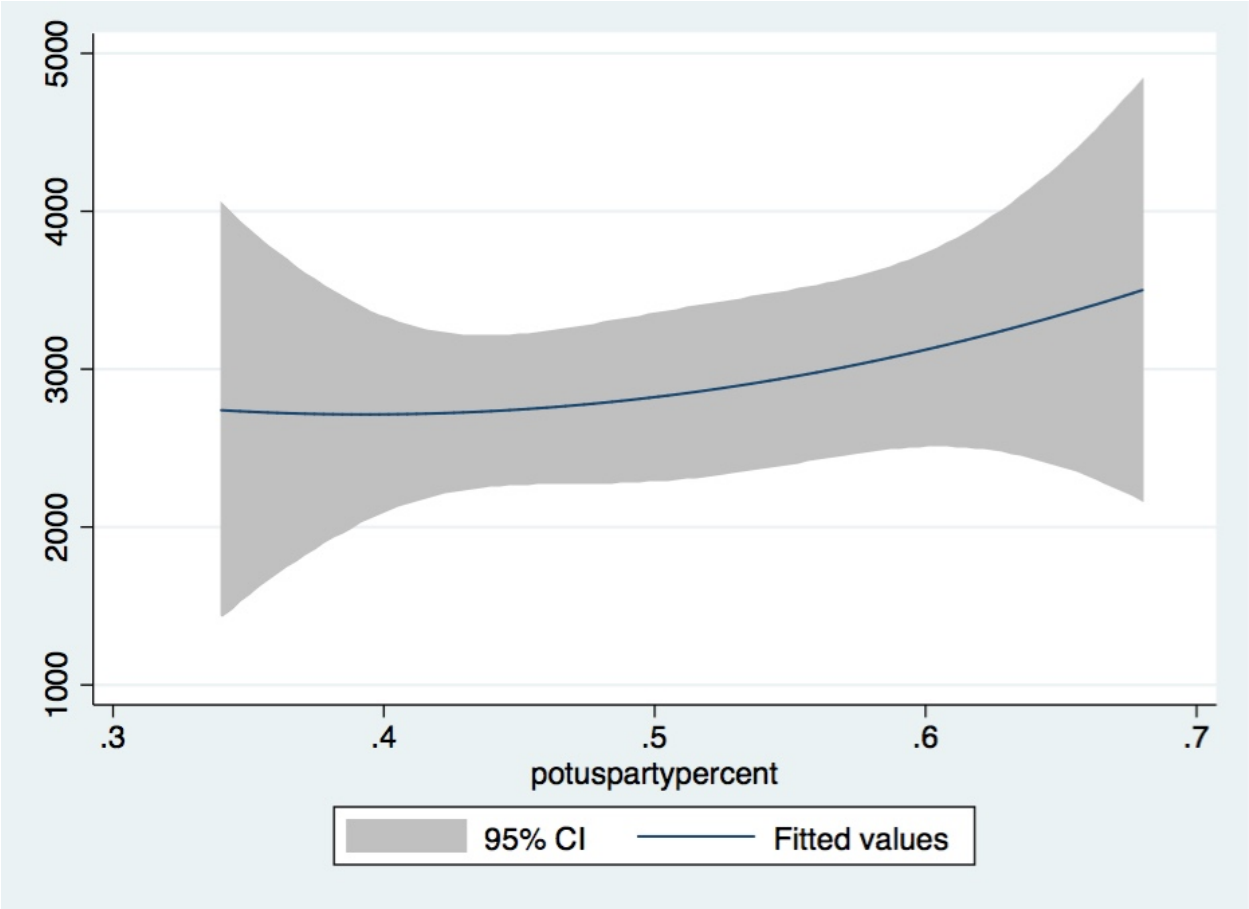

Figure 3: Correlation between US forces and President's Party in Congress

Obviously, there are fewer examples with either strongly unified or deeply divided

governments, so the variance on both the far left- and right-hand sides grows accordingly.

To see how the regression equations account for other factors, it is important to get a sense of the trajectory of U.S. force deployments after fitting the model. The graph below shows that the tendency is very similar with the exception of the far-right hand side, which actually begins to revert to the mean in the presence of a strongly united government for both models. In this graph, the y-axis is the logged total of U.S. force presence, but taking that into account, the results are similar. The predicted value given the other variables for the random-effects model has a minimum of just under 2,900 American forces in the most oppositional governments and a maximum of over 3,000 in friendly Congresses. The fixed-effects model predicts even higher values, with a minimum of 3,200 in highly opposed Congresses and a maximum of over 3,300 in friendly ones.

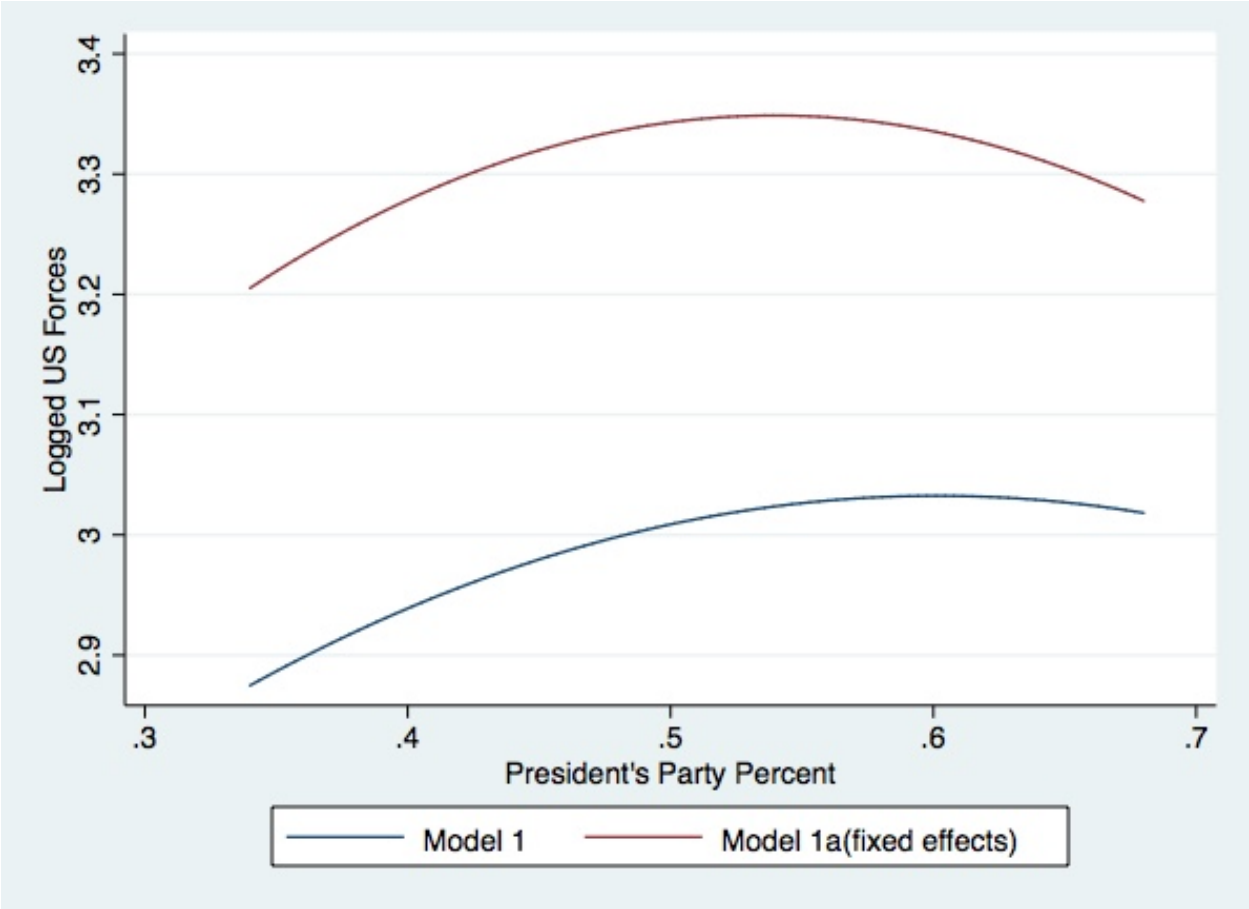

Figure 4: Predicted values of Dependent Variable per value of President's Party

Therefore, in this baseline model of U.S. domestic politics and set of control variables, it is clear that the structure of the political branches of the U.S. government has a profound effect upon presence outcomes. The following sections will test the previous theories, and in the final section, I combine all the models to produce a comprehensive analysis of the variables that have an impact upon U.S. military deployments.

Traditional Geopolitical Theories

The hypothesis that the United States bases its forces abroad according to primarily strategic considerations (with respect to an American rival) finds preliminary support in my empirical testing. According to this theory, two main issues should matter when measuring the distribution of American forces across the international system. The first is that American forces station in strategically important territory mainly according to the ranges of American and rival weapons systems within a region of importance. During the Cold War, the ranges of various weapons systems of the American nuclear triad drove this logic. Second, the only political issue that is generally included within this vein of literature is the nature of the basing state's alliance portfolio. That nature is defined by whether or not the basing state was aligned militarily with the United States. In other words, a member of NATO will receive an American presence and a non-member European state will not.

Of the group of dummy variables, I have omitted the North American region in order to avoid the perfect collinearity that would result in including all regions' set of dummy variables. Therefore, all regional coefficients are in reference to the North American region as baseline. This region does not actually include the United States within the dataset, since the unit of analysis is the pairing between the United States and its bilateral partners since 1950. Whereas it might seem that the North American region would contain a dense network of American forces, by only

including non-U.S. countries in the region, the American forces in its North American partners are rather limited. American forces can reach most locations within North America from the continental United States, and the arctic region is accessible by American bases in Alaska, Greenland, and Iceland. Therefore, regions with higher densities of American forces abroad will produce highly positive coefficients on these dummy variables compared to the baseline of North America.

Of course, the standard regression form does not correct for correlation between years t and t-1. Therefore, a time-series cross-sectional model with these data is appropriate, using country-year panels. The geopolitical time series model uses random effects to correct for time dependence, as well as random effects for each American bilateral partner. The geographic dummy variables act as regional fixed effects, and including country fixed effects would eliminate these variables from inclusion. So, the one model is sufficient. Putting these regional variables together into the same regression equation used in the previous section (with the exception of the domestic American political variable) yields the following results:

Table 2

Variable	Model 2	Model 2 Cold War	Model 2 ~Cold War
Alliance	*1.7252	1.7092	**1.8411
	0.8780	1.0401	0.6520
Capabilities ratio	-0.0792	0.0217	-0.3831
	0.1915	0.2049	0.1069
Distance	**-0.0004	**-0.0004	-0.0002
	0.0001	0.0002	0.0001
MID	-0.6071	-0.5615	-0.1934
	0.3251	0.4140	0.1467
Total Troops Abroad	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
DoD Budget Constant	0.0000	*0.0000	0.0000
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
South America	0.5290	0.6720	-0.1558
	0.8612	0.9338	0.7233
Europe	*2.4076	**3.4419	1.2640
	1.1259	1.2404	0.9569
Africa	1.3459	1.3734	0.7465
	1.2052	1.3822	1.0080
Middle EAst	*3.1323	*3.2547	2.1609
	1.3107	1.4769	1.1940
Asia	*3.0563	*4.0832	1.1415
	1.5512	1.7953	1.2528
Oceania	1.5821	1.9399	1.2098
	1.2222	1.4609	1.0182
Constant	2.4689	1.9621	**4.0836
	1.6894	1.8386	1.2556
N	6443	4812	1633

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

The results indicate that there is preliminary support for the regional aspect of the geopolitical theory of U.S. deployment. In the sample as a whole (but particularly during the Cold War), three regional dummy variables are significant – those for Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. The Middle East is perhaps a bit of a

surprising result (given the descriptive statistics below), but Europe and Asia were the main regions of strategic priority for the United States during the Cold War. Despite the lessening of tensions in both of these regions (notwithstanding recent developments in Ukraine), these regions continue to be home to tens of thousands of American forces. Beyond the geographic variables, the other main prediction of the geography- and strategy-oriented perspective is that military alliance partners will see a higher level of U.S. deployments. The results above show a positive coefficient on the alliance variable for the models corresponding to the whole sample and the post-Cold War period.

Some descriptive statistics are instructive here to emphasize the size of the American presence in Europe as opposed to others, even during the post-Cold War period. During the entire period since 1950, deployments to European countries were about 5,255, or roughly twice as high as the typical state. As a comparison to less strategically important regions, deployments to average South American or African states since 1950 were 444 and 99, respectively.

Obviously, the geopolitical situation has changed substantially since the end of the Cold War (notwithstanding recent developments in Eastern Europe), but the distribution of American forces abroad still resembles the one during the Cold War in comparative terms. While the number of deployments has gone down in terms of their totals, the United States still maintains sizeable forces in Europe, with an average of 2,389 in the post-Cold War period. This numbers are still well above the

post-Cold War average of 1,709 for all states, but less so than during the Soviet rivalry period.

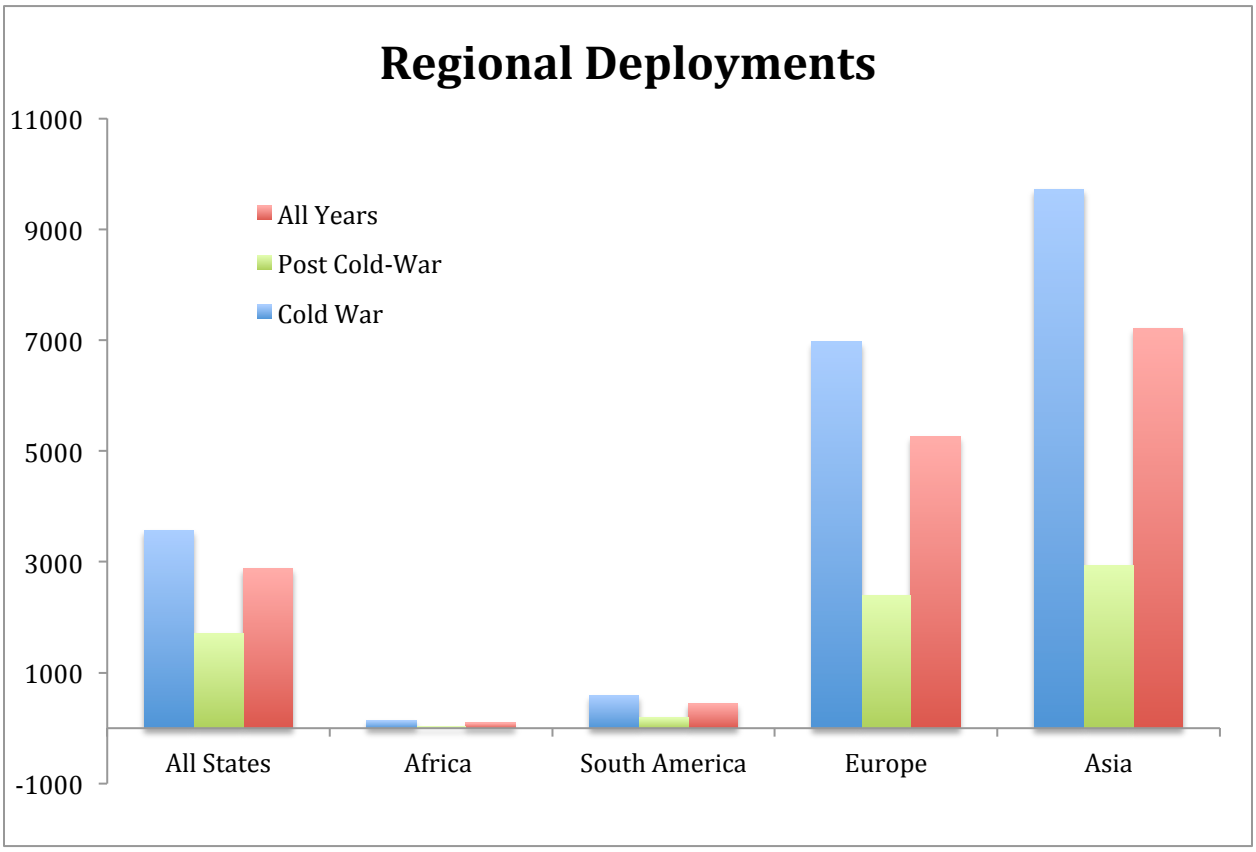

Figure 5: US deployments in key regions over time

The Asian region has a large American presence both before and after the Cold War. During the Cold War, the dummy variable for Asia is significant and positive, signifying the American geopolitical focus on the region. However, the variance in deployments from state to state in Asia after the Cold War appears to mostly be a function of the other variables within the regression equation above. For instance, the majority of the American presence in Asia exists within South Korea and Japan today, both part of an alliance relationship with the United States.

Similarly, the largest deployments within the region came during the Vietnam War, so the variance in the American presence is captured by the "wartime" variable.

The one region that sees a reversal of the general trend toward fewer troops is, predictably, the Middle East. During the Cold War, the United States deployed an average of just 557 personnel to Middle Eastern states.[3] Many Arab states aligned with the Soviet Union during that period, and the ones that did not received only small deployments of personnel to support Strategic Air Command (SAC) bases aimed at the weak "underbelly" of the Soviet Union. The region has since become the target of American strategic concerns, and it has received deployments of over 6,000 personnel to the average Middle Eastern state since the Cold War. This number is nearly four times the all-state average. Obviously, for all of these descriptive statistics, the state-by-state situation varies considerably, but a broad-based look at regional deployments gives an accurate sense of where American strategic considerations lie in a given time period.

[3] Controlling for all the other factors within the regression equation, this number is still significant, whereas the higher post-Cold War number is not, indicating that the increase in U.S. presence in the Middle East is due to other factors within the econometric analysis.

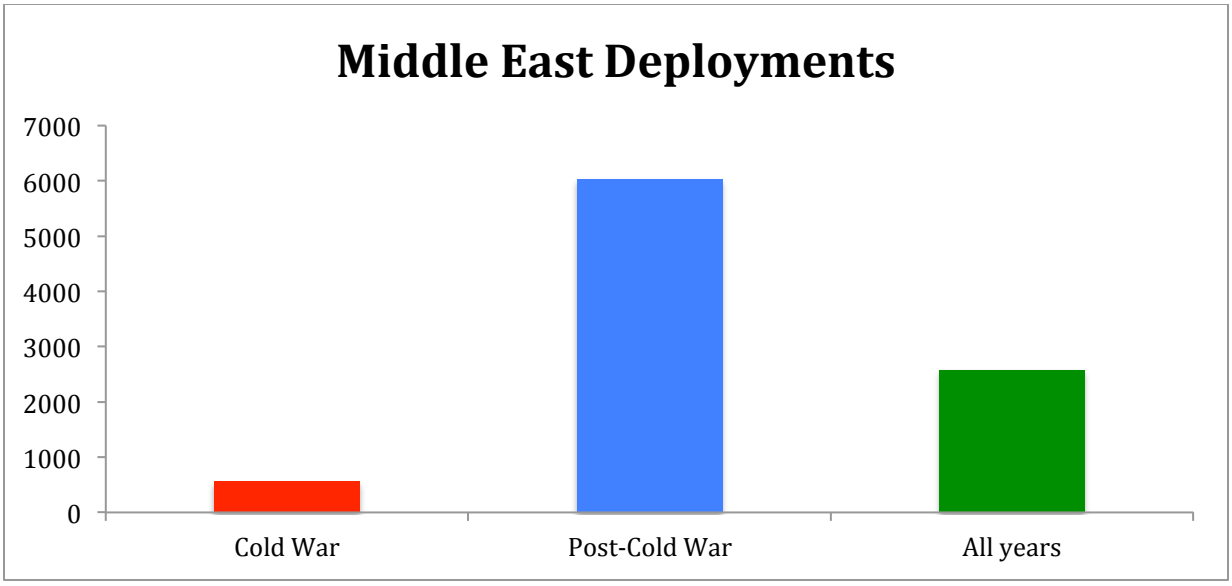

Figure 6: Middle East deployments over time

These variables indicate a degree of validity to the geographic and strategic theory of basing. While the regional dummy variables are an admittedly crude measure of geographic importance, the results are generally in accordance with how American strategy has proceeded over the past 65 years. However, there are some questions that remain. For example, why has Europe been the center of American basing strategy for this time period? Speaking from a purely strategic standpoint, other regions were equally important, especially in light of world events both during and after the Cold War. The focus on these traditional areas and the lack of flexibility in the realignment of the basing structure is likely the product of the *political* process within the United States itself. Therefore, while the strategic theories of basing bring us a significant distance toward an understanding of the production of the American presence overseas, it leaves the significant impact of domestic politics

out of the equation. We will see in the combined model below how these variables behave when accounting for domestic American politics.

Democratic Theory

The most prominent post-Cold War theory on the tendencies in American basing abroad is from Alexander Cooley, who posits that democratic states make better basing partners. This theory should result in higher numbers of forces in democratic states over time, either through attrition or through intentional placement. Cooley's theory also predicts a secondary spike of American deployments in fully autocratic regimes, since the consolidated regime provides a greater amount of stability than in anocratic regimes. These anocratic governments can use the bases as a focal point to gain political support in times of turmoil, either by opposing the basing arrangement to gain nationalist credentials, or by selectively distributing basing rents. A RAND Corporation study alternatively hypothesizes a simple positive correlation between regime type and U.S. deployments, but with no secondary spike within consolidated autocratic regimes. Initial descriptive statistics seem to support the Cooley hypothesis, as we can see from the graph below.

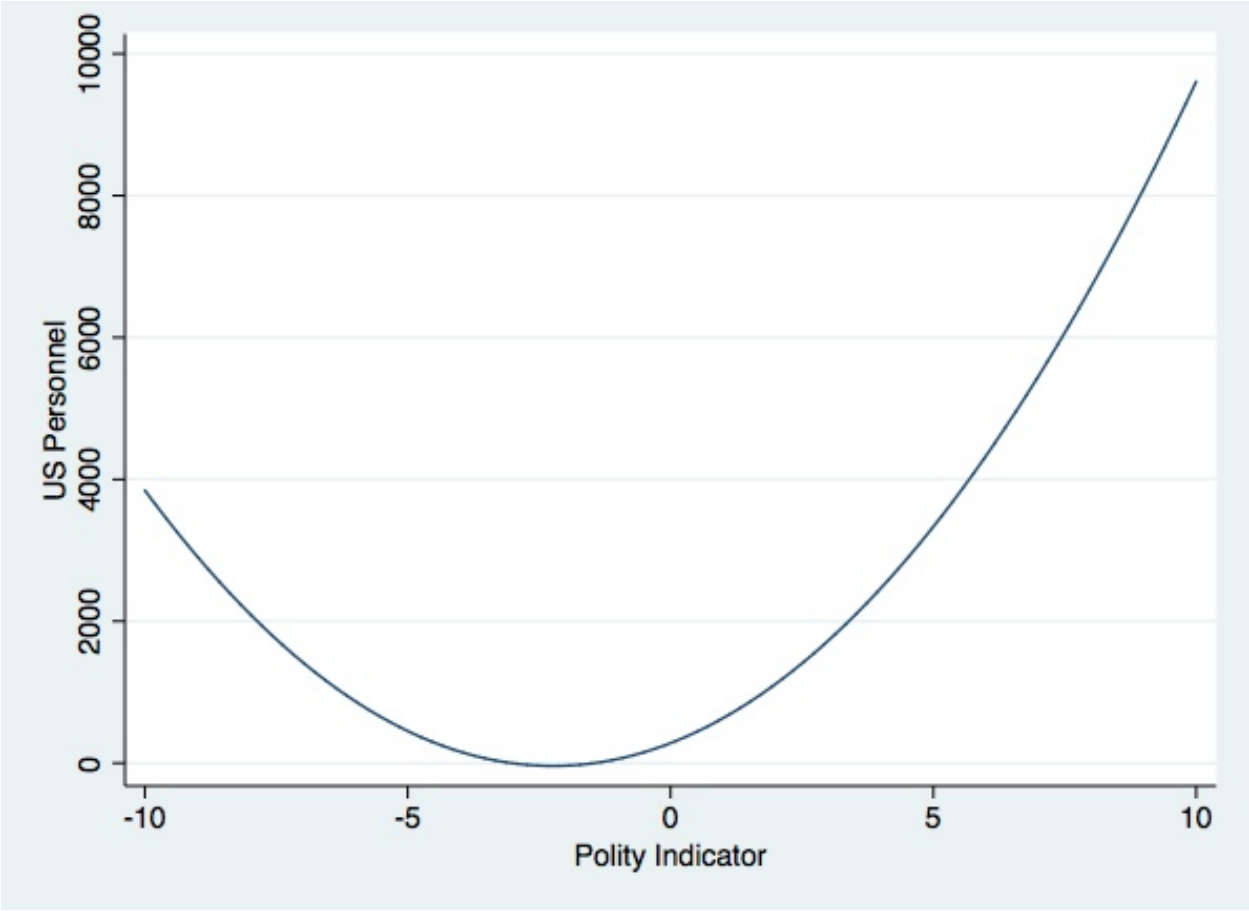

Figure 7: US deployments in relation to regime type

However, a more complete econometric analysis must be done in order to test the validity of this hypothesis. I first include the Polity measurement in the baseline model and exclude the variables for U.S. domestic governance and region. The results of this model are labeled as Model 3, which includes random effects for both time and spatial dependence. As we can see, the results for the Polity indicator are insignificant. Like the other models, I have clustered the errors on the country level in order to account for the heteroskedasticity across dyadic partners.

Table 3a

Variable	Model 3	Model 3a	Model 3b
Polity	-0.0138	-0.0200	-0.0169
	0.0119	0.0122	0.0124
Alliance	*2.0402	1.7141	*2.0840
	1.0053	1.1425	0.9740
Capabilities Ratio	-0.0181	0.2617	-0.3152
	0.2277	0.2832	0.2774
Distance	-0.0001	(omitted)	-0.0001
	0.0002		0.0001
MID	-0.6177	-0.6147	*-0.6906
	0.3268	0.3182	0.3231
Total Troops Abroad	1.844e-07	-2.790e-07	6.669e-06
	3.101e-07	3.785e-07	5.012e-06
DoD Budget Constant	*9.762e-07	**1.480e-06	.00002153
	4.571e-07	5.194e-07	.00001654
Constant	2.7876	1.1897	-4.4841
	1.5652	1.3529	7.2218
N	5977	5977	5977

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Model 3a includes country-fixed effects to model for the possibility that U.S. military deployments are a function of the particularities of any individual bilateral partnership between the United States and the host. The results are consistent with the base Model 3, with the exception of a loss in significance for the alliance variable. However, the Polity variable remains far from statistical significance.

Model 3b includes yearly-fixed effects (which have been excluded from the results here for concision, but are included in the appendix) account for the potentiality that U.S. presence in any particular country is a function of exogenous shocks in that particular year. What we find is that the results are again broadly consistent with Model 3, with the exception of the loss of significance for the DoD

budget variable and increased significance for ongoing MIDs between the bilateral partner and the United States. Most importantly, however, results for the Polity variable remain insignificant, which indicates that the RAND hypothesis of a linear correlation between regime type and basing lacks support.

However, Cooley predicts a non-linear relationship between the three main regime types. Primarily, he predicts that both autocracies and democracies are better basing partners than anocracies. In order to test this hypothesis, I have constructed three dummy variables – one for each regime type. Since the primary hypothesis from Cooley is that both regime types at the ends of the Polity spectrum are more stable than those between -5 and 5 on the Polity scale, I run a single regression, including the dummies for democracy and autocracy with anocracy as the reference category.

Table 3b

Variable	Model 3c
Autocracy	-0.13348853
	0.13944336
Democracy	*-0.33256207
	0.16252846
Alliance	*2.040436
	1.0149479
Capabilities Ratio	-0.0366986
	0.22778437
Distance	-0.00012958
	0.00015296
MID	-0.60355322
	0.32656127
Total Troops Abroad	2.15E-07
	3.03E-07
DoD Budget Constant	*9.58E-07
	4.50E-07
Constant	3.0476838
	1.5934742

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

The results of Model 3c show that, once all the other variables are accounted for, democracies actually receive fewer American military forces than anocracies during this period. Other model variations using fixed effects and including regional dummies produce the same findings. These results are surprising, and while a more thorough analysis than space allows within this study may cast doubt on this negative correlation, a preliminary negative finding casts doubt on Cooley's prediction of a positive correlation between democracy and American basing.

The model variations indicate that there is little reason to believe that regime type plays a consistent role in basing trends in the way that the RAND study predicts, either through purposeful implementation or by attrition. While the basing

of American forces in democracies may be a *qualitatively* better decision, it does not appear to have had a resulting impact upon the actual basing process over the past 65 years.

Combined Model

Each of these theories has thus far been tested in isolation, by itself, with a group of control variables that, generally, have a consistent effect upon deployment outcomes. It is possible that these models suffer from significant omitted variable bias without the other variables present, and that in a combined model the results will change dramatically. In fact, that is the very argument put forth here, in that any discussion of geopolitical calculations is incomplete without recognizing the domestic political structures that determine priorities abroad. Therefore, in the final model I include all three variables of interest, both of those from previous theories and the one espoused here.

Similar to the previous sections, Model 4 uses random effects to account for both time and spatial dependence, but Model 4a uses country-fixed effects to account for unobserved factors specific to the particular bilateral relationship. Because of this, country-invariant variables drop from the analysis (distance and region). As before, robust standard errors clustered on the country level are used to adjust for heteroskedasticity across bilateral pairs. The results of model 4 indicate

that the most statistically significant effect of the three theories presented here is from American domestic politics

Table 4

Variable	Model 4	Model 4a
President's Party Percent	***0.5399	***0.5411
	0.1575	0.1578
Polity	-0.0157	-0.0209
	0.0120	0.0122
Alliance	*2.1376	1.7288
	1.0224	1.1371
Capabilities	0.0213	0.2595
	0.2328	0.2836
Distance	*-0.0003	(omitted)
	0.0001	
MID	-0.6187	-0.6144
	0.3241	0.3172
Total Troops Abroad	5.315e-08	-3.516e-07
	3.171e-07	3.821e-07
DoD Budget Constant	**1.367e-06	**1.797e-06
	4.895e-07	5.428e-07
South America	0.0084	(omitted)
	1.1109	
Europe	2.0458	(omitted)
	1.3025	
Africa	0.7799	(omitted)
	1.3999	
Middle East	2.6987	(omitted)
	1.4511	
Asia	2.7784	(omitted)
	1.6981	
Oceania	1.3603	(omitted)
	1.4818	
Constant	1.8546	0.8424
	1.8707	1.3695

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

In the first model, the regional dummy variables drop past the point of standard statistical significance, which is consistent with the theory presented here. When taking into account domestic political structures within the United States (partisanship in the White House and Congress), the regional variables drop in importance. This indicates that the geopolitical theories suffered from omitted variable bias by failing to include variables for the main determinant of U.S. presence abroad – American politics.

The alliance variable maintains significance for the random-effects model, as it does in all random effects models. This indicates strong support for the idea that alliance ties greatly increase the probability that a country will station American forces on its territory, which should not be surprising. The loss of significance in fixed-effects models is likely due to the fact that many countries see little variation in their alliance ties with the United States during this period. This limits the size of the coefficient, because cross-temporal variation is the only type that generates the coefficient estimate.

The combined model using the Polity measure indicates no linear relationship between regime type and American basing, as the RAND study predicts. As above, however, a combined model using regime dummies shows a negative correlation between democratic regimes and American deployments in relation to their anocratic counterparts and when controlling for all other factors. This result provides further support for the findings above, which indicate that, at the very

least, the relationship between regime type and American basing is not as has been predicted in the literature. The other variables perform as predicted, and so there is little reason to believe that the results of the democracy dummy indicate a problem with the model. Rather, they may indicate a prediction that simply is not born out by the evidence.

Following the estimation of this model, I graphed the fitted values of the deployment of U.S. forces at each level of the president's party percent. The result shows that there is a predicted sharp increase in U.S. presence as the president's party gains power in Congress. When graphed with the 95% confidence interval, the relationship is slightly less clear because of the fewer examples of strong control of Congress by either the president's party or the opposition party (and therefore a larger variance), but it is still an upward trajectory in American presence moving left to right along the x-axis.

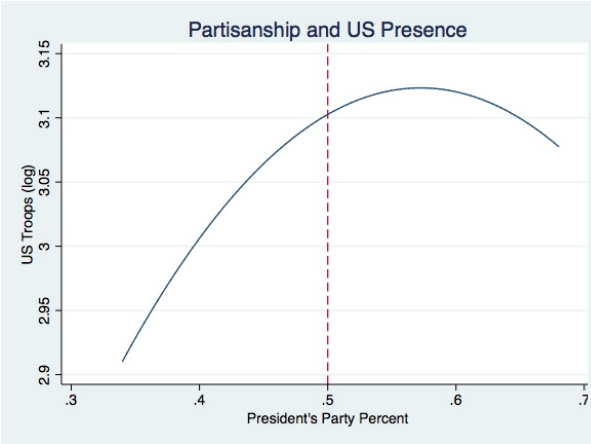

Figure 8: Combined Model Prediction

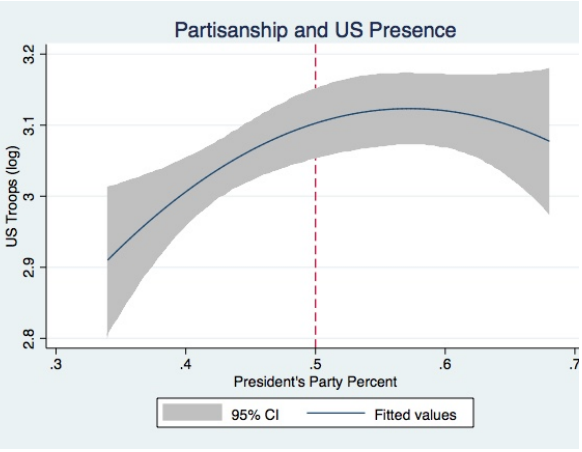

Figure 9: Combined Model Prediction with confidence interval

Statistically, substantively, and visually, it appears that American domestic politics have a dramatic effect upon force deployments abroad. This result is robust to the inclusion of the other main variables that scholars have hypothesized, and it is also robust to the use of different types of models.

That said, host states still have a significant amount of agency within the basing process. They choose whether or not to align with the United States, whether or not to invite American forces into the country, and if they do invite U.S. forces in, they can shape that relationship depending on the level of threat felt in the American partner. The reasons why particular countries make the decision to host U.S. military forces is not at issue within this particular work, and it will be taken up elsewhere. Of key importance here are the variables that *American* policymakers use to determine when and where to deploy American forces. The two previous theories hypothesized that either geopolitical strategy or regime type of the potential host were key drivers of deployments. This study finds that the main determinant of American presence overseas is partisanship within the United States itself, because of the distributional and political consequences of basing placement.

Robustness checks

As a first robustness check, I excluded each variable from the model to test the stability of the results for the president's party percent. In each model, the variable maintains stability on both the coefficient estimate and the standard error, and therefore on the significance level. However, one exception is the exclusion of the variable for DoD spending in constant 2005 U.S. dollars. There are several reasons to conclude that this is not a significant issue. First, the DoD spending variable is lagged one year, whereas the party variable is not. There is little theoretical reason to believe that *overall* DoD spending significantly impacts the ability of the president's party to gain power in any particular year, casting doubt on the idea that the two variables violate the assumption of independence among the independent variables. While we certainly would expect that the president's party percent would affect the DoD budget, the fact that the DoD budget is lagged rules out this possibility within the models themselves. Further, we should certainly expect the DoD budget variable to play a significant role in the production of overseas deployments (which it does, as the models demonstrate). The necessity of the variable's inclusion, combined with the statistical reasons to discount the idea that it violates a foundational assumption of regression models, should alleviate concerns about the loss in significance after dropping the DoD budget measure.

As another robustness check, I divided the sample into Cold War and non-Cold War years and ran the combined model. In the Cold War years, the main

independent variable's direction and significance maintain consistency, but in the post-Cold War years it drops past standard significance levels. However, this is also the case for some of the other key variables that maintain high levels of significance across the whole sample (particularly the DoD budget variable), which perhaps indicates that the short time period available for these variables following the end of the Cold War (14 years) dictates the estimate. The increase in the standard errors for this period lends credence to this analysis of the statistical results.

I also run a series of robustness checks using different ways of modeling cross-sectional dependence. Using a population-averaged estimator, the results for the main independent variable maintain their sign and significance, and the behavior of the other variables is consistent with the models using both random- and fixed-effects. I conducted further robustness checks that include a change in the measurement of military capabilities (included in the Appendix), the raw measurement of alliances from COW, and by removing the exclusion of countries at war with the United States. All of these checks produce similar results to the models presented here.

Therefore, while there are a small number of cases listed above where the results of these models change dramatically, there is ample reason to believe that the base model specification is a good fit. There are many theoretical and statistical reasons to maintain the inclusion of the DoD budget variable, and so dropping it is

likely inappropriate. Similarly, there is reason to believe that the change in results for the post-Cold War sample is due to the small sample size.

Implications

The key implication of the combined models' findings relate to Hypothesis 1. Since 1950, the two branches of government have been unified only 41.28% of the time, and the result of this is that the tendency of divided governments to retract the overseas military presence has had a substantial effect. Over this time period, the portion of American forces stationed outside the borders of the United States has gone from 36% in 1950 (and again in 1967) to only 12% in 2014. The trend since 1950 has been one of a consistent and secular decline in the total portion of U.S. forces stationed abroad.

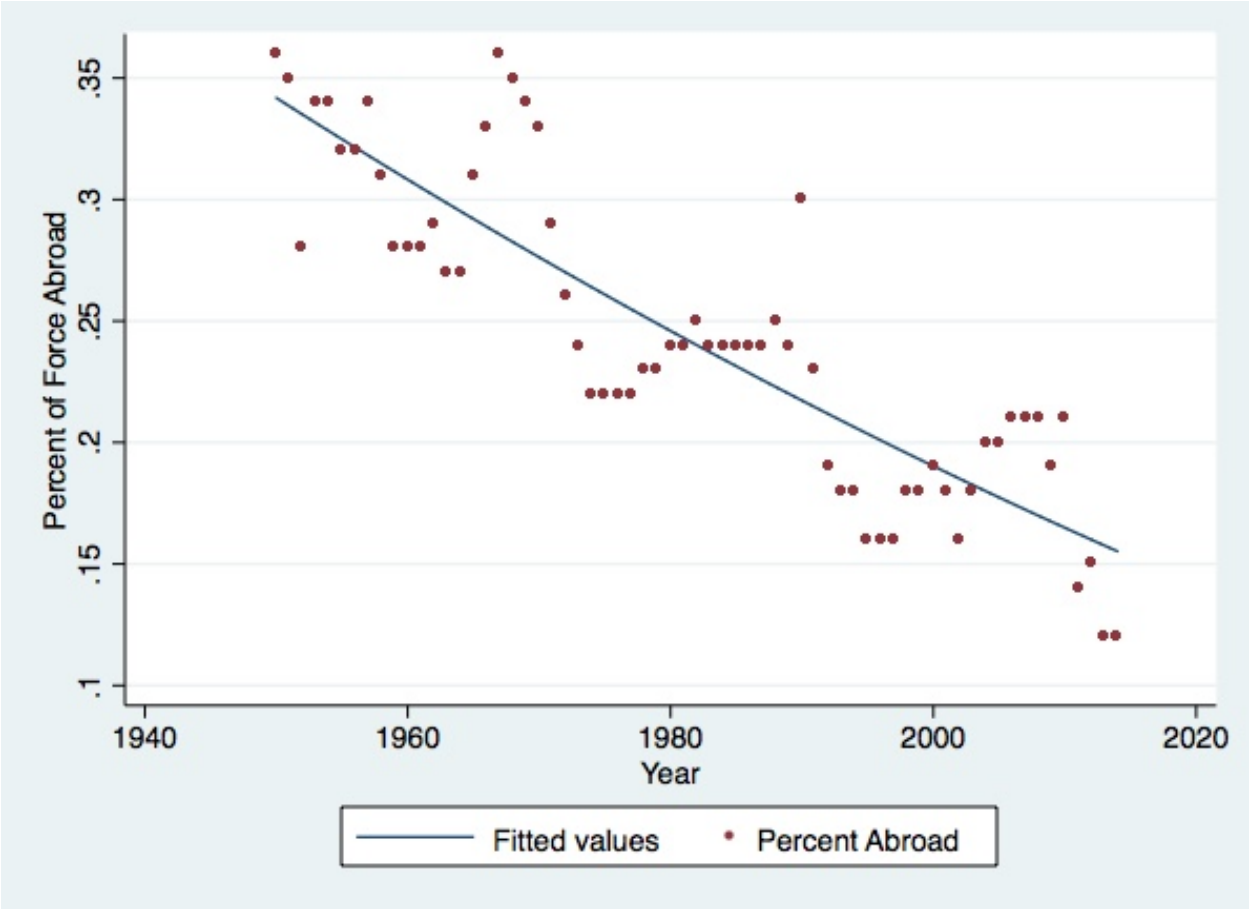

Figure 10: Percent of US Deployments Abroad over time

While this graph shows the simple trend over time, the regression results from Models 4 and 4a show the results when accounting for the other variables at play. While the scaling is different here, since the predictions measure the value of deployments to an individual country, we see the same trend. In both the model using random effects (Model 4) and the one using fixed effects (Model 4a), there is a consistent decline in U.S. deployments over time when accounting for a country's location, alliances, region, and other variables. It therefore seems clear that the

domestic political and distributional consequences of basing decisions have led to a general withdrawal, over time, of American forces from overseas.

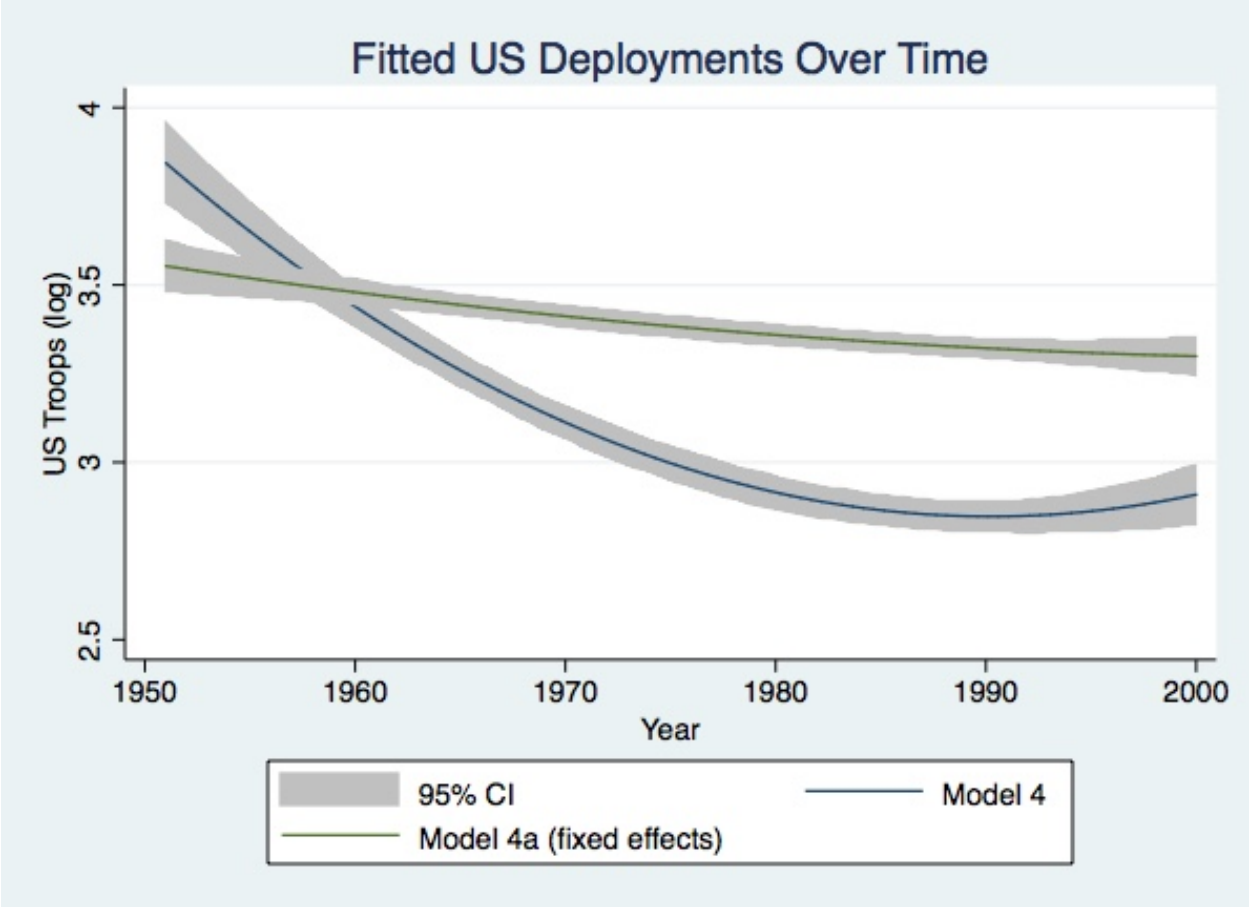

Figure 11: Logged US Deployments per country over time

The conventional wisdom is that WWII created a "sea change" in American politics, in that it led to an acceptance of a leading role for the United States in world politics. One of the factors in this role as a world leader is a military presence around the world, to shore up allies, to protect the global commons, and to conduct stability operations to protect the Westphalian and liberal world orders (Lake 2009; Wolforth 1999). The theory presented here is a potential rebuttal to this

conventional wisdom, showing that the trend since 1950 in American military presence has actually been one of withdrawal.

The structural incentives of the American political system are such that individual members of Congress seek to "bring home the bacon" from abroad. In many cases, individual members actively pursue an agenda of bringing basing back to their home districts, but Congress also has two rules in place that passively accomplish the same goal over time. Congress controls the budget. As such, it can take advantage of the distributional consequences of bringing forces back to American soil and give local Congressional districts an economic boost in the process. This dynamic makes the indefinite placement of American forces abroad unlikely, and we can see this process unfold in the evidence presented here.

Before concluding, several potential counterarguments should be noted. First, some may argue that unity between Congress and the President indicates a more general national unity of strategic vision for American foreign policy. While this may be true, an examination of the results above indicates that the unity between branches is associated with *expansion* of US presence abroad. A simple association between unity of branches and unity of vision would leave room for the possibility of massive withdrawal during periods of unified government. Certainly, since 1950 there have been such periods in the wake of large foreign involvements, but unified branches are associated with expansion rather than simple efficiency in expansion *or* withdrawal, which is what this counterargument would suggest.

Second, it is possible that the general withdrawal indicated by the confirmation of hypothesis 1 is the result of a substitution of capital for labor. In other words, as military technology has advanced (drone and satellite technology, for example), it is less necessary to have large groups of personnel abroad. While this general trend is indeed the case, the argument posited here would suggest that the causation runs in the opposite direction. For instance, as Congress has put increasing restrictions on the ability to actually deploy military forces on the ground, there has been a necessity to substitute for this lost labor by investing in technology. In addition, the idea that capital substitutes for labor abroad is slightly off the mark, as the capital expenditures on military technology are actually made at home rather than abroad. As such, the withdrawal of personnel from abroad may be a "win-win" for members of Congress, as both the repatriation of bases and the increased investment in military technology provide a benefit to local economies within the United States. However, this will be a difficult issue to untangle, and as such, I leave it here as a claim left for elaboration and investigation in future work.

Lastly, the combination of Hypotheses 1 and 2 could lead to the conclusion that the opposition party in the United States has become stronger over time. While the opposition party has no increased in power over time, it has possessed more influence over the entire time period discussed here. Since 1950, the political branches of the American government have been unified only about 41% of the time, and so the increases that take place during these periods are outweighed by

the decreases that occur in the almost 59% of the time in which the government is divided. Furthermore, as we can see in Figures 8, 9, and 10, the increases that occur during periods of unified governments are generally smaller than the decreases that occur in divided governments. These two factors in combination produce the downward trajectory that confirms Hypothesis 1.

Conclusion

Previous theories have posited that strategy and regime type dictate the establishment of American presence overseas. After an examination of the best evidence available on the subject, it appears that the regime type theories of overseas basing lack sufficient evidence to conclude that they are correct. While democracies may make better basing partners in a qualitative sense, there appears to be little backing for the idea that American policy makers make decisions based upon that consideration.

The strategic theory of basing appears to have more support. The areas of strategic foci (specifically Europe, the Middle East, and Asia) received more deployments than those that did not, especially during the Cold War but also noticeably in the Middle East after the Cold War. However, the models that include domestic political variables for the United States drop these regional variables beyond the level of standard statistical significance. This result suggests that theories based on geography and strategy have suffered from omitted variable bias by ignoring American domestic political determinants of what constitutes good strategy and who determines geographic priority.

By looking at the trends in American military deployments overseas, we can see that an examination of American domestic politics offers significant insights into the nature of the decision-making process that establishes American bases overseas. Officials make risky decisions to extend American commitments overseas mostly in

circumstances of political unity between the executive and legislative branches. This political process determines when the U.S. president can make an outward "push" of forces. However, the status quo is a congressional "pull" of forces and resources back to the United States.

In the end, the process of establishing bases abroad is one driven by the specific political considerations of particular officeholders. All politicians wish to stay in office, but their incentives are quite different depending on which office they hold. The president has a national constituency to satisfy in order to stay in office, while the individual member of Congress has a narrow and local one. Both of these conclusions are not new to political science, and therefore should be relatively uncontroversial. In the context of basing theory, however, the inclusion of self-interested decision makers mostly concerned with individual incentives is largely unexplored. This study seeks to fill that gap in the literature, and the evidence presented here indicates that there is significant evidence that the logic and incentives of the domestic political process within the United States dictates deployment patterns for the American military.

Appendix A – Model specifications

	DV	Main IV	Cross-sectional dependence	Intertemporal dependence	Time Period
Model 1	US Troops (log)	President's Party Percent	Random effects	IV acts as fixed effects	1950-2014
Model 1a	US Troops (log)	President's Party Percent	Fixed effects	IV acts as fixed effects	1950-2014
Model 2	US Troops (log)	Regions	Regions act as fixed effects	Random effects	1950-2014
Model 2cw	US Troops (log)	Regions	Regions act as fixed effects	Random effects	Cold War only
Model 2ncw	US Troops (log)	Regions	Regions act as fixed effects	Random effects	Post-Cold War only
Model 3	US Troops (log)	Polity	Random effects	Random effects	1950-2014
Model 3a	US Troops (log)	Polity	Fixed effects	Random effects	1950-2014
Model 3b	US Troops (log)	Polity	Random effects	Fixed effects	1950-2014
Model 4	US Troops (log)	All	Random effects	IV acts as fixed effects	1950-2014
Model 4a	US Troops (log)	All	Fixed effects	IV acts as fixed effects	1950-2014

Appendix B - Full output for Model 3b

```
. xtreg logustroops l.polity allianceconverted capratio distance cwmid totaltroopsabroad
> l.dodbudgetconstant i.year if wartime==0, r
note: 1999.year omitted because of collinearity
note: 2000.year omitted because of collinearity

Random-effects GLS regression                   Number of obs      =       5977
Group variable: ccode                           Number of groups   =        156

R-sq:  within  = 0.0725                         Obs per group: min =          3
       between = 0.5045                                        avg =       38.3
       overall = 0.4052                                        max =         50

                                                Wald chi2(54)      =     376.87
corr(u_i, X)   = 0 (assumed)                    Prob > chi2        =     0.0000

                                        (Std. Err. adjusted for 156 clusters in ccode)
```

logustroops	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
polity						
L1.	-.0169356	.0124251	-1.36	0.173	-.0412883	.007417
allianceconverted	2.084032	.9739584	2.14	0.032	.1751091	3.992956
capratio	-.3152028	.2774058	-1.14	0.256	-.8589082	.2285026
distance	-.0001051	.0001456	-0.72	0.470	-.0003906	.0001803
cwmid	-.6905758	.3230669	-2.14	0.033	-1.323775	-.0573762
totaltroopsabroad	6.67e-06	5.01e-06	1.33	0.183	-3.15e-06	.0000165
dodbudgetconstant						
L1.	.0000215	.0000165	1.30	0.193	-.0000109	.0000539
year						
1952	-2.126232	1.69365	-1.26	0.209	-5.445726	1.193261
1953	-8.266813	6.428949	-1.29	0.198	-20.86732	4.333695
1954	-7.897667	6.480402	-1.22	0.223	-20.59902	4.803688
1955	-5.577361	4.909826	-1.14	0.256	-15.20044	4.045721
1956	-3.475799	3.424144	-1.02	0.310	-10.187	3.235399
1957	-3.064483	3.135343	-0.98	0.328	-9.209642	3.080677
1958	-2.555874	2.682012	-0.95	0.341	-7.812521	2.700773
1959	-2.083511	2.172698	-0.96	0.338	-6.34192	2.174899
1960	-1.911816	2.03915	-0.94	0.348	-5.908477	2.084845
1961	-2.286049	2.206957	-1.04	0.300	-6.611606	2.039508
1962	-2.602539	2.528164	-1.03	0.303	-7.557649	2.352572
1963	-2.621781	2.632989	-1.00	0.319	-7.782345	2.538783
1964	-2.387618	2.427337	-0.98	0.325	-7.145111	2.369874
1965	-3.394442	2.993154	-1.13	0.257	-9.260916	2.472031
1966	-4.161809	3.560054	-1.17	0.242	-11.13939	2.815769
1967	-6.046416	4.889743	-1.24	0.216	-15.63014	3.537304
1968	-8.241037	6.470504	-1.27	0.203	-20.92299	4.440918
1969	-9.10296	7.05597	-1.29	0.197	-22.93241	4.726487
1970	-7.681129	5.801274	-1.32	0.185	-19.05142	3.689158
1971	-5.660655	4.327898	-1.31	0.191	-14.14318	2.82187
1972	-3.693528	2.758572	-1.34	0.181	-9.100229	1.713173
1973	-2.628706	1.939444	-1.36	0.175	-6.429947	1.172534
1974	-1.555432	1.122706	-1.39	0.166	-3.755894	.6450311
1975	-1.266475	.8324558	-1.52	0.128	-2.898059	.3651082
1976	-1.153527	.6339626	-1.82	0.069	-2.396071	.0890167
1977	-.7695738	.4743441	-1.62	0.105	-1.699271	.1601234
1978	-.7527026	.4974024	-1.51	0.130	-1.727593	.2221882
1979	-.8172568	.5108312	-1.60	0.110	-1.818468	.1839541
1980	-.9709926	.6594145	-1.47	0.141	-2.263421	.3214361
1981	-1.25869	.8628812	-1.46	0.145	-2.949906	.4325266
1982	-1.74196	1.243429	-1.40	0.161	-4.179036	.6951153
1983	-2.285588	1.751496	-1.30	0.192	-5.718457	1.147282
1984	-2.898406	2.204355	-1.31	0.189	-7.218863	1.42205
1985	-2.806622	2.215529	-1.27	0.205	-7.148978	1.535734
1986	-3.310548	2.674315	-1.24	0.216	-8.55211	1.931013
1987	-3.906308	3.140682	-1.24	0.214	-10.06193	2.249316
1988	-3.993387	3.260419	-1.22	0.221	-10.38369	2.396916
1989	-4.203708	3.371637	-1.25	0.212	-10.812	2.40458
1990	-4.349408	3.436771	-1.27	0.206	-11.08536	2.38654
1991	-3.532801	2.833752	-1.25	0.213	-9.086853	2.021252
1992	-1.605494	1.32209	-1.21	0.225	-4.196743	.985755
1993	-2.003936	1.616892	-1.24	0.215	-5.172985	1.165114
1994	-1.612771	1.343678	-1.20	0.230	-4.246331	1.02079
1995	-.93676	.8158382	-1.15	0.251	-2.535773	.6622533
1996	-.5060858	.5085092	-1.00	0.320	-1.502746	.490574
1997	-.1419826	.1629302	-0.87	0.384	-.4613199	.1773548
1998	-.148809	.1725261	-0.86	0.388	-.4869539	.189336
1999	0	(omitted)				
2000	0	(omitted)				
_cons	-4.484108	7.221772	-0.62	0.535	-18.63852	9.670306
sigma_u	1.6896373					
sigma_e	1.198997					
rho	.66508924	(fraction of variance due to u_i)				

Appendix C – Models with raw capabilities scores

Variable	Model 1-alt	Model 1a-alt	Model 2-alt	Model 2cw-alt	Model 2ncw-alt
Alliance	1.6078	1.4118	1.6928	1.6745	**1.8443
	0.8806	0.9649	0.8862	1.0524	0.6778
Capabilities	-2.1811	-8.7699	-2.6202	-0.3073	22.1623
	5.6691	7.3388	5.5887	19.0243	12.5322
			**_	**_	
Distance	-0.0001	(omitted)	0.0004	0.0004	-0.0002
	0.0001		0.0001	0.0002	0.0001
MID	-0.5928	-0.5940	-0.5955	-0.5646	-0.1592
	0.3288	0.3279	0.3294	0.4253	0.1495
Total Troops Abroad	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
DoD Budget	*0.0000	*0.0000	0.0000	*0.0000	0.0000
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
President's Party Percent	**0.4228	**0.4243			
	0.1467	0.1458			
South America			0.6166	0.6550	0.3226
			0.8581	0.8879	0.8342
Europe			*2.5926	**3.3809	*2.0150
			1.0428	1.0820	1.0067
Africa			1.3826	1.3325	1.1430
			1.2217	1.3475	1.1182
Middle East			**3.2877	*3.1881	*3.0636
			1.2461	1.3589	1.2558
Asia			*3.2805	*4.0010	1.9686
			1.4720	1.6678	1.3325
Oceania			1.2917	1.9111	0.9493
			1.2579	1.4228	1.2422
_cons	2.4112	2.1869	2.0016	2.1251	1.5872
	0.9937	0.3398	1.1624	1.2752	1.1171

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Variable	Model 3-alt	Model 3a-alt	Model 3b-alt	Model 4-alt	Model 4a-alt
Polity	-0.0147	-0.0175	-0.0209	-0.0160	-0.0185
	0.0118	0.0120	0.0123	0.0119	0.0121
Alliance	1.9941	1.7709	*2.0375	*2.1069	1.7855
	1.0275	1.1377	0.9987	1.0318	1.1322
Capabilities	-2.9504	-9.7087	-1.9165	-3.3935	-9.7069
	5.8343	7.3211	5.6741	5.7715	7.3688
Distance	-0.0001	(omitted)	-0.0001	*-0.0004	(omitted)
	0.0002		0.0002	0.0001	
MID	-0.6148	-0.6183	*-0.6645	-0.6164	-0.6179
	0.3321	0.3311	0.3253	0.3306	0.3298
Total Troops Abroad	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
DoD Budget	*0.0000	*0.0000	0.0000	**0.0000	**0.0000
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
President's Party Percent				***0.5423	***0.5553
				0.1594	0.1590
South America				0.0247	(omitted)
				1.1061	
Europe				2.0480	(omitted)
				1.2608	
Africa				0.7875	(omitted)
				1.4099	
Middle East				2.6883	(omitted)
				1.4264	
Asia				2.7887	(omitted)
				1.6482	
Oceania				1.3884	(omitted)
				1.4793	
_cons	*2.7798	***2.4276	-6.2097	2.0010	***2.0614
	1.0917	0.3848	6.9661	1.3961	0.4010

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

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